

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 INRE-00 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-03 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OES-03 TRSE-00 OMB-01

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7413

NASA HDQ WASHDC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TANANARIVE 1202

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NASA, PFOR, US, MA

SUBJECT: NASA STATION NEGOTIATIONS END: RATSIRAKA SAYS STATION
MUST CLOSE

REF: STATE 158065

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA RECEIVED CHARGE AT 3:00PM, JULY 10,
LISTENED POLITELY TO MY PRESENTATION BASED ON REFTEL AND THEN
SAID USG LEFT HIM NO OPTION BUT TO CLOSE STATION NEXT WEEK BECAUSE
OF HIS POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO DELIVER ON \$10 MILLION RENTAL
PAYMENTS. END SUMMARY.

1. I MET WITH PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA IN HIS OFFICE ALONE WHERE HE
RECEIVED ME CORDIALLY AND LISTENED ATTENTIVELY AND POLITELY TO MY
PRESENTATION ON BENEFITS OF STATION FOR MADAGASCAR AND OTHER POINTS
PER INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTEL. RATSIRAKA RESPONDED SAYING THAT
MAIN PROBLEM WAS HIS HAVING GIVEN HIS WORD TO CNPD (NATIONAL
POPULAR DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL) ON OBTAINING HIGH RENTAL FROM NASA
WHEN HE RETURNED FROM U.S. 1973, BASED ON HIS DISCUSSION WITH
NASA DIRECTOR FLETCHER (RATSIRAKA SUPPLIED NAME THIS TIME).
HE SAID IF USG WILL NOT PAY BACK RENT STATION THERE WAS NO CHOICE
BUT TO CLOSE STATION. WHEN I SAID THAT WAS COSTLY DECISION FOR
BOTH COUNTRIES AND ESPECIALLY FOR MADAGASCAR, RATSIRAKA AGREED.
HE SAID HE WAS AWARE OF COSTS AND BENEFITS, BUT THAT AS CHIEF OF
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STATE HE HAD TO KEEP HIS WORD. AS A SMALL DEVELOPING NATION
MADAGASCAR HAD LITTLE MORE THAN ITS SOVEREIGNTY, INDEPENDENCE
AND INTEGRITY TO FALL BACK ON AND MALAGASY PEOPLE WERE PREPARED
TO MAKE SACRIFICES, HE CONTINUED. HE SAID COST TO MADAGASCAR OF

HAVING FRENCH LEAVE DIEGO SUAREZ NAVAL BASE WAS EVEN HIGHER THAN THAT OF CLOSING NASA.

2. I THEN MADE PITCH FOR KEEPING NASA STATION OPEN FOR ANOTHER YEAR WITHOUT ANY FORMAL AGREEMENT TO GET AROUND PRESENT POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WHILE GENERATING FAVORABLE LOCAL PUBLICITY FOR STATION (SEE PARA 5#. RATSIRAKA SAID HE HAD SIMILAR PLANS IF USG PAID BACK RENT AND SAID HE HAD TOLD AMBASSADOR MENDENHALL THAT IF BACK RENT PAID HE (RATSIRAKA) WOULD BE ABLE TO HANDLE LOCAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS AND SUSPICIONS. HE SAID HE WOULD HAVE BEEN GLAD TO PLAY UP APOLLO-SOYUZ AND GET SOVIETS OUT TO STATION, BUT NOT NOW.

3. I MADE A FEW MORE STABS AT GETTING HIM TO RECONSIDER. HIS RESPONSE WERE UNIFORMLY NEGATIVE. I REMINDED HIM AGAIN THAT STATION REPRESENTED IMPORTANT ASPECT OF US-MALAGASY BILATERAL RELATIONS AND THAT NOW EVEN IF USG PUSHED FOR BILATERAL AID, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE CONGRESS TO APPROVE ANY. HE NODDED SAYING THAT HE ACCEPTED THIS. HE SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED NASA WITH GENERAL ANDRIAMAHAZO WHO HE IMPLIED MADE SAME ARGUMENTS. HE SAID HE TOLD GENERAL IMPORTANT POINT WAS HIS WORD WHATEVER THE BENEFITS OF STATION. FINALLY, I ASKED HIM IF HE HIMSELF COULD PROPOSE ANY ALTERNATIVES TO RENTAL PAYMENTS, AND HE REPLIED IN ENGLISH - "I'M SORRY." I THEN ASKED WHAT HIS PLANS WERE IN TERMS OF TIMING OF CLOSING OF STATION. HE SAID, "TO GET MAXIMUM IMPACT THE STATION HAS TO CLOSE NEXT WEEK." I ASKED IF HE MEANT BEFORE APOLLO-SOYUZ AND HE NODDED AFFIRMATIVELY.

4. RATSIRAKA CLOSED SAYING THAT HE WAS NOT ANTI-AMERICAN. HE SAID IT WAS U.S. SIDE THAT LIED TO HIM ABOUT SECRETARY KISSINGER NOT BEING IN NEW YORK AND HENCE UNAVAILABLE FOR A MEETING, WHEN, IN FACT, SECRETARY, ACCORDING TO PRC AMBASSADOR, WAS THERE. ALSO, HE CONCLUDED IT WAS U.S. THAT WAS NOT KEEPING ITS WORD, NOT HIM. I TOLD HIM AS HE HAD BEEN DISCUSSED BEFORE THAT THESE WERE MISUNDERSTANDINGS, AND THAT THERE DID NOT APPEAR TO BE ANYTHING ELSE TO SAY SINCE OUR POSITIONS WERE CLEAR AND HANDED HIM AIDE-MEMOIRE.
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5. TEXT OF FIRST PERSON NOTE FROM CHARGE TO PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA WHICH SERVED AS AIDE-MEMOIRE IS AS FOLLOWS (ALL POINTS WERE COVERED IN CONVERSATION EXCEPT BREAKDOWN OF NASA EXPENDITURES WHICH WERE SUMMARIZED):

BEGIN TEXT: TO - COMMANDER DIDIER RATSIRAKA, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, CHIEF OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT
DEAR MR. PRESIDENT,

A. I HAVE THE HONOR TO REFER TO THE CONVERSATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT RATSIRAKA AND MYSELF ON JUNE 25, 1975, CONCERNING THE NASA STATION.

B. NASA AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN PLEASED WITH ITS ASSOCIATION WITH THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT IN THE OPERATION OF THE NASA STATION. THERE HAVE BEEN AND CONTINUE TO BE ADVANTAGES TO BOTH OUR COUNTRIES THAT FLOW FROM THE OPERATION OF THE STATION IN MADAGASCAR.

C. THE DIRECT ECONOMIC BENEFITS ACCRUING TO THE MALAGASY ECONOMY HAVE BEEN INCREASING AND MERIT RESTATING:

NASA EXPENDITURES PER YEAR IN MADAGASCAR:

1. SALARIES (MALAGASY NATIONALS) FMG 125,824,000 \$610,472.
2. COMMUNICATIONS - STIMAD 153,172,000 743,159.
3. TRAINING EXPENDITURES (TO SEND A 10,000,000 48,517.

MALAGASY TO THE U.S. DOES NOT INCLUDE SALARIES

4. PETROLEUM PRODUCTS 75,959,000 368,536.
5. MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES AND SERVICES 48,000,000 232,885.
6. TRANSPORTATION OF FREIGHT (EQUIPMENT, 35,596,000 177,950.
ETC. 1/2 OF TOTAL EXPENDITURES ARE
ESTIMATED TO GO TO MALAGASY CONTRACTORS
AND MADAIR) -----

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FMG 448,551,000 \$2,181,519.

THIS ANNUAL EXPENDITURE OF IN EXCESS OF \$2 MILLION IS OF DIRECT BENEFIT TO THE MALAGASY ECONOMY, AND THOSE OTHER FOREIGN COUNTRIES WHERE NASA TRACKING STATIONS ARE LOCATED ARE PLEASED TO ACCEPT THIS INCOME WITHOUT REQUIRING THE ADDITIONAL PAYMENT OF RENT, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE STATION IS NOT A PROFIT-MAKING ENTERPRISE. NASA HAS, HOWEVER, IN THE CASE OF MADAGASCAR AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO PAY \$100,000 RENT PER YEAR FROM JANUARY 1, 1973. THIS WOULD BRING THE TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF THE STATION TO THE MALAGASY ECONOMY TO OVER 450,000,000 FMG. IN ADDITION, THE NASA STATION HAS DONATED OVER \$1 MILLION WORTH OF SURPLUS EQUIPMENT TO VARIOUS MALAGASY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

D. NEITHER NASA OR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, HAS THE FUNDS TO PAY \$10 MILLION IN BACK RENTAL PAYMENTS. DURING THE DISCUSSIONS HELD WITH THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT SINCE 1973, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS CONSISTENTLY ADOPTED THE POSITION THAT IT HAS NO OBLIGATION TO PAY A RENT ON THE NASA STATION FOR THE PERIOD PRIOR TO 1973. THE LAND ON WHICH THE SATION IS ESTABLISHED WAS LEASED TO THE NASA THROUGH SUCCESSIVE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE MALAGASY REPUBLIC, WITHOUT THEIR HAVING TAKEN ACTION OR THERE HAVING BEEN A PROVISION BETWEEN

THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ON THE PAYMENT OF A RENT. THIS SITUATION IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH MANY LEASES IN VARIOUS AREAS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD WHERE NO SPECIFIC MONEY RENT IS PAID, AND IN FACT, IS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS GOVERNING ALL THE NASA STATIONS LOCATED ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TANANARIVE 1202

E. IT SHOULD BE RECALLED THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT IN THE RECENT PAST. THIS PAST APRIL THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT PROVIDED A \$3 MILLION (600,000,000 FMG) LOAN FOR THE RAILROAD AND IT OFFERED \$10 MILLION (2,040,000,000 FMG) WORTH OF RICE ON FAVORABLE CREDIT TERMS UNDER THE U.S. P.L. 480 PROGRAM. POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE EXIST AS WELL.

F. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT ALTHOUGH THE NASA STATION IS LOCATED IN A GOOD GEOGRAPHIC POSITION, IT HAS NO "STRATEGIC" VALUE. THE STATION IS USED SOLELY FOR CIVILIAN PROGRAMS AND IS NOT USED FOR STRATEGIC PURPOSES. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT WOULD LIKE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MALAGASY REPUBLIC TO UNDERSTAND THAT A NASA TRACKING STATION IN MADAGASCAR IS NOT AN ABSOLUTE NASA REQUIREMENT AND THAT NASA HAS RECOURSE TO OTHER ALTERNATIVES WHICH, IF NECESSARY, IT IS PREPARED TO USE.

G. IT IS THE PREFERENCE OF NASA AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT NOT TO RESORT TO ONE OF THESE OTHER ALTERNATIVES AND NOT TO CLOSE THE STATION. NASA IS SINCERE IN ITS DESIRE TO COMPLETE MALAGASZATION OF THE STATION BY THE END OF 1976 AND HAS OFFERED TO CONTRACT WITH THE MALAGASY P&T TO OPERATE THE STATION.

H. IN OUR DISCUSSION ON JUNE 25 YOU SAID THAT WITHOUT THE BACK RENTAL PAYMENTS THERE COULD BE NO AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE OPERATION
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OF THE STATION. LET ME SUGGEST THAT THE NASA STATION BE PERMITTED TO CONTINUE TO OPERATE FOR ANOTHER YEAR WITHOUT ANY FORMAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS, BUT THAT DURING THE NEXT YEAR INFORMAL WORKING ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THE NASA STATION AND THE PTT BE ESTABLISHED WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE MALAGASZATION OF THE STATION TO PROCEED. THIS WOULD AID IN THE BENEFITS OF THE STATION TO MADAGASCAR BECOMING MORE WIDELY KNOWN AND BETTER UNDERSTOOD. OVER THE NEXT YEAR SOME OF THE POLITICAL SUSPICIONS CONCERNING THE NASA STATION YOU MENTIONED MIGHT SUBSIDE. THE APOLLO-SOYUZ MISSION SHOULD ALSO SERVE TO GENERATE FAVORABLE LOCAL PUBLICITY FOR THE STATION AND SERVE TO UNDERLINE ITS OPEN, NON-SECRET NATURE. WE HOPE YOU AND/OR SENIOR MALAGASY OFFICIALS WILL BE ABLE TO ATTEND A BRIEFING AT THE STATION ON THE APOLLO-SOYUZ MISSION WHILE IT IS IN PROGRESS. WE ALSO PLAN TO INVITE THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR AND LOCAL PRESS REPRESENTATIVES.

I. AS STATED AT THE OUTSET, NASA AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN PLEASED WITH ITS ASSOCIATION WITH THE MALAGASY GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE NASA STATION AND WOULD REGRET TERMINATION OF THIS SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF THE U.S.-MALAGASY BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. THEREFORE, THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HOPES THE GOVERNMENT OF THE MALAGASY REPUBLIC WILL RECONSIDER ITS POSITION, SINCE THE U.S.G. BELIEVES THAT THE EXISTENCE OF THE STATION HAS BEEN ADVANTAGEOUS TO BOTH COUNTRIES AND COULD BE EVEN MORE ADVANTAGEOUS TO MADAGASCAR IN THE FUTURE.

J. COMPLIMENTARY CLOSE. END TEXT.
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